



WARD GROVE is pictured with his wife, Kessie, at his birthday celebration in May which honored him for all his work for the advancement of aviation. Grove, 83, was presented with a plaque, which was placed on site at Grove Field Airport, named after him in 1984, in Fern Prairie. (Photo courtesy of Tina Goodnight)

Memorial set for Ward Grove, early pioneer in aviation history

By SANDRA WALTERS
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Over the years the name Ward Grove has become well known in the field of area aviation. On Saturday, Sept. 11, at 1 p.m. at Grove Field in Fern Prairie, a memorial service will be held to remember the man who did so much for the communities of Camas and Washougal.

Grove, 83, died Aug. 31, 1993, at Highland Terrace Nursing Center. In his honor, a missing pilot formation will fly over the memorial service. Following the service, Grove's ashes will be scattered over the airport.

Tina Goodnight, of the Camas-Washougal Aviation Association, said Grove would be missed.

"Ward was a fixture at the airport," she said. "We will miss him."

Sheldon Tyler, Camas-Washougal Port manager, said, "He was a man who gave a lot to the area. The staff will miss him out at the airport."

Grove, born May 17, 1910, in Buncoda, Wash., first came to the area in 1924 from Woodland with his mother, Gertrude, after his father died.

Grove said in an interview in May that it was while living in Vancouver that his love for flying machines grew and he began taking flying lessons at Pearson Airpark.

"I was 18 when I first learned to fly," Grove said in the interview. "I always wanted to fly."

On Jan. 1, 1934, Grove and Kessie were married. In order for Grove to



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continue with his flight instruction, Kessie worked nights at a dance club.

In the May interview, Grove said he experienced two things in 1937 which were big moments in aviation history in the Vancouver area.

First, he saw Charles Lindbergh land on Swan Island in a replica of the plane he made history in when he flew his transatlantic flight.

The second episode occurred when he and Kessie were returning home from North Bonneville and saw the trans-polar USSR Chkalov flight land at Pearson Airpark.

Grove said in the interview his love

of aircraft continued to grow and in 1945 he and Kessie cashed in their war bonds and bought 15 acres in Fern Prairie to start an airport.

During his ownership of the airport, Grove trained war veterans, using the G.I. bill, to become pilots. To provide for better training, Ward extended the runway from 1,650 to 2,400 feet, after purchasing an additional 5.3 acres.

In 1962, the Port of Camas-Washougal purchased the landing strip at the airport and in 1978 the entire airport. Grove worked as a flight instructor until 1975, and resided on the property until a recent decline in health forced his move to Highland Terrace Nursing Center.

In May, Grove was presented a plaque for his long-term commitment to the community and aviation.

Grove was a member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Union; OX5 Aviation Pioneers, Fraternal Order of the Eagles and Northwest Antique Airplanes Club.

Donations may be made to a charity of your choice or to Kessie, who is living at Highland Terrace Nursing Home. An estate sale will also take place Sept. 10 and 11 at the airport.

Survivors include his wife, Kessie of Camas; two nieces, Donna Spalding of Sequim, Wash., and Dorothy Virostko of Troutdale, Ore.; an nephew, Nyal Parmenter of Enumclaw, Wash.; and numerous great-nieces and nephews.